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Finding aid for the Avery C. Gilleo collection

Collection 198

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Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections
Department

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator:	Gilleo, Avery C
Title:	Avery C. Gilleo collection
ID:	Collection 198
ID [Archivists Toolkit Database::RESOURCE]:	206
Date [inclusive]:	1915-1919
Physical Description:	2 Linear Feet Four boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Avery C. Gilleo collection includes letters written by him while serving in the Michigan National Guard, 126th Infantry (63rd Brigade, 32nd Division, Company K) during World War I. The letters were written to his fiancée Eleanore Alten, the daughter of painter Mathais Alten. The collection also includes a portable letter writing kit that Gilleo used while in service and a pocket compass-mirror combo. In the letters Gilleo describes his duties as an officer, social issues and plans for his future. The majority of the letters were written from Camp Grayling, Texas; New Jersey and France. Assorted miscellanea such as photographs of unidentified family members and even Avery's school work is included in this collection.

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Biographical / Historical

Avery Clare Gilleo was born in Lakeview, Michigan on June 4, 1894, and died in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in 1946. (Jan. 17, 1957?) He was the son of Clarence and Gertrude Gilleo, and later resided at 333 Sunset NW, Grand Rapids. Schooling included Central High School of Grand Rapids and a brief enrollment at Junior College. Gilleo joined the Michigan National Guard and while on active duty attained the rank of First Lieutenant [and Second Lieutenant], and after the war was given the rank of Captain. While in France, Gilleo served with the American Expeditionary Forces, 126th Infantry, 63 Brigade, 32 Division,

Company K. Eleanore Alten (Dec. 1, 1896-Jan. 12, 1994) & Avery married after his return from the War, 1919. Eleanore was the eldest daughter of painter Mathias Alten.

Their son, M. Alten Gilleo (Mathias Alten Gilleo), was born May 20 1921 and died Nov. 14, 1980. He was a scientist with Allied Chemical Corporation in Morristown, New Jersey at his death. Their daughter, Anita Marie Gilleo, lives in Grand Rapids, and continues to attempt to set up an Historic House Museum for grandfather Mathias Alten's works and life. Avery was divorced from Eleanore 1927 and his second wife was Meta E. Baker.

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Scope and Contents

This collection is made up of 278 letters written by Avery Gilleo to his fiancée Eleanore Alten, daughter of Grand Rapids, Michigan artist Mathias Alten. The letters were written while Gilleo was at Camp Grayling, on border patrol in El Paso, Texas, training in Waco, Texas, awaiting overseas deployment from New Jersey, and in France while fighting. The collection provides a glimpse at courtship by mail and the popular culture of the early 1900s. Issues like women's suffrage, temperance, newspaper coverage of World War I and illiteracy are among those addressed in the letters. Some letters also describe Gilleo's duties as an officer in the National Guard during World War I. Letters written near the end of the war describe Gilleo's two month stay in a hospital in France due to a leg injury.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Anita Gilleo, 1994, 2002; accession numbers 1994. 047, 2002.060, 2002. 060B, 2016.047

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Related Materials

Related Materials

See also Collection 318, Grand Rapids in World War I Collection, which includes additional information on local soldiers in the Great War and other GRPL archival collections related to that war.

Collection 365, Ralph W. Demmon Collection, including some image of Gilleo and his wife Eleanor Alten Gilleo, who was the sister of Demmon's wife, Camelia Alten Demmon.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Personal narratives, American
- letters (correspondence)
- Gilleo, Eleanore Alten
- Gilleo, Avery C

Collection Inventory

Letters, 1915-1919, n. d.

Title/Description	Instances	
Letters, Aug, 1915	Box 1	folder 1
Letters, Jun-Dec, 1916	Box 1	folder 2
Letters, Jan-Apr, 1917	Box 1	folder 3
Letters, Aug, 1917	Box 1	folder 4
Letters, Sep, 1917	Box 1	folder 5
Letters, Oct, 1917	Box 1	folder 6

Letters, Nov, 1917	Box 2	folder 1
Letters, Dec, 1917	Box 2	folder 2
Letters, Jan, 1918	Box 2	folder 3
Letters, Feb, 1918	Box 2	folder 4
Letters, Mar, 1918	Box 2	folder 5
Letters, Apr, 1918	Box 2	folder 6
Letters, May, 1918	Box 2	folder 7
Letters, Jun, 1918	Box 2	folder 8
Letters, Jul, 1918	Box 2	folder 9
Letters, Aug, 1918	Box 2	folder 10
Letters, Sep, 1918	Box 2	folder 11
Letters, Oct, 1918	Box 2	folder 12
Letters, Nov, 1918	Box 2	folder 13
Letters, Dec, 1918	Box 3	folder 1
Letters, Jan, 1919	Box 2	folder 14
Letters, n. d.	Box 2	folder 15

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Photographs, ca. 1919, n. d.

Title/Description	Instances	
Gilleo, Avery (in Model-T) (2), c1919	Box 2	folder 16
World War I soldiers, 1919	Box 2	folder 17
Avery C. Gilleo, in uniform, c. 1919	Box 2	folder 18
Avery Gilleo (2 poses, in uniform, attached to wood), c. 1919	Box 2	folder 19
Avery Gilleo (1 with Noble portrait folder), n.d., ca. 1940?	Box 2	folder 20
Portrait photo [2002. 060 added 5/13/2002]	Box 2	folder 21
2002. 060B Photos (6)	Box 2	folder 22
Title/Description	Instances	
Eleanore Alten (later Mrs. Avery C. Gilleo) in WWI uniform 'Dress up' n.d.	Box 2	folder 22
Avery Gilleo in auto	Box 2	folder 22
Avery Gilleo in uniform near tents	Box 2	folder 22

Avery Gilleo in sweater with hat a hip	Box 2	folder 22
Avery Gilleo with child Georgiana Lynette Marie(?) Donovan(?)	Box 2	folder 22

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Miscellaneous, ca. 1919

Title/Description	Instances	
Portable letter writing kit, c1919	Box 3	
2 wooden cutout with applied photo of Gilleo in uniform, c1919	Box 3	
WWI Certificate of appointment to Second Lieutenant (Mich.) [Added to the Collection 3/30/2001], August 5, 1917	Box 3	
Photo - Sergts. Ford and Avery Gilleo Fort Wayne 1918, 1918	Box 4	Folder 1
Law of Agency Homework, 1912	Box 4	folder 2
Twentieth Century Almanac, 1921	Box 4	folder 3
Avery in Uniform in a Greenhouse, 1917-1919	Box 4	folder 4
Portrait of Avery, 1917-1919	Box 4	Folder 5
WWI Compass, 1917-1919	Box 4	folder 6
Unidentified Family Photos, (1850-1920)	Box 4	Folder 7
Unidentified Family Photos, (1850-1920)	Box 4	folder 8
Obituary - M. Alten Gilleo, 1980-11-24	Box 4	folder 9
Assorted Correspondence and Miscellanea, (1948-1975)	Box 4	folder 10

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Post-war documents, (1920-1950)

Title/Description	Instances	
Letter - The Fatherland corporation, 1920-09-10	Box 4	Folder 11
Old Colony Insurance Company - Personal Effects, 1925-02-07-1926-02-07	Box 4	Folder 12
Letter - Veteran Administration regarding denial of pension benefits, 1933-07-24	Box 4	Folder 13
Receipt for United Air Lines stock purchase , 1937-01-09	Box 4	Folder 14
Credit Information, 1938-02-25	Box 4	Folder 15
Receipt for Tuition for Mrs. Alten Gilleo, 1938-07-09	Box 4	Folder 16

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